

Communication Matters

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New Video Remote Interpreting Call Center

Provides Instant Communication Access for Deaf Individuals

February 22, 2007 - Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth Director Robert W. Swanson announced the launch of the Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) call center in Muskegon. VRI enables Deaf and hearing individuals who are in the same location to easily conduct conversations through a remote interpreter, video conferencing technology, and a high-speed Internet connection.



Scott Peyton, DHHC Director, addresses a full house with interpreter Betsy Jackson

The VRI call center was established by a partnership involving DLEG, the Communication Access Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Flint, and the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Connection of Muskegon, where it is located. The center is designed to increase access to qualified interpreters for Deaf residents, businesses and human service organizations in Muskegon, Newaygo,

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Automatic T-Coils: The Pros & The Cons

- Julie Eckhardt

The concept of a touchless T-coil is appealing. A hearing aid user does not need to adjust a miniscule button to use the telephone. Instead, the hearing aid automatically switches to T-coil mode when the telephone headset is brought near the ear. This is indeed a very good feature for some hearing aid users, but not all. If an audiologist recommends an automatic T-coil, it is wise to ask some questions.

Mark Ross, Ph.D. is the former director of research and training at the League for the Hard of Hearing, and an associate at the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) at the Lexington Center, New York. In an article published in the July/August 2001 issue of *Hearing Loss: The Journal of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People*, Dr. Ross explains the pros and cons of this innovation:

Is the hearing aid user likely to need a hearing assistive device now or in the near future? A touchless t-coil will not work with many devices.

Is the hearing aid user unable or unwilling to manipulate tiny switches on a hearing aid? The touchless t-coil may be a great benefit.

"A common complaint among many hearing aid users is the difficulty they have in switching to the T-coil (telecoil) position when the phone rings. These switches are tiny and hard to feel and require only a tiny movement from one setting to another. In the process of switching

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Information or news related to Deaf or Hard of Hearing services may be forwarded to Julie Eckhardt at jewel@chartermi.net. Views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily the views of Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth-Rehabilitation Services. Communication Matters is available on the web at www.michigan.gov/mrs and on the E-Learn Deaf & Hard of Hearing Resource Center.

Touchless T-Coils: Pro and Con

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to the T-coil some people may accidentally turn the aid off. Others may have to hold the aid with one hand, while searching for the T-coil with the other – which makes answering the phone rather a challenging juggling event! People with arthritic or insensitive fingers have a particularly difficult time in using the T-coil. In brief, even if the T-coil works well, there are often just too many obstacles to overcome before this important hearing tool can be accessed efficiently. Finally, it seems that the hearing aid industry has responded to these concerns by developing a “touchless T-coil.”

A T-coil is a tiny magnet imbedded in the hearing aid which interacts with the magnetic field in the telephone. With an automatic T-coil, the telephone’s magnetic field acts as a switch to turn on the T-coil. When the phone is taken away from the ear, the T-coil switches off. This is of great benefit to some people.

The difficulty, according to Dr. Ross, is for those people who also wish to use hearing assistive devices:

“The magnetic field has to be of a certain strength in order to activate the T-coil. Hearing-aid-compatible telephones do emit a strong enough magnetic field to do this. But not a large-area inductive listening (IL) system, which uses a wire loop on the floor to deliver the electromagnetic field. By the time the magnetic energy travels from the floor to a person’s hearing aid, it is too weak to trigger the T-coil in the “touchless” system. The field strength from a neckloop (hooked into some

assistive listening device, for example) is also not sufficient to activate the T-coil (though I suspect that the magnetic field generated by a silhouette inductor would be strong enough). This means that people cannot use the T-coils in their hearing aids as an assistive listening device in situations where there is a floor loop or where the use of a neckloop is desired. This is not a trivial objection, since there is also no way to manually switch on the T-coil. It seems that in solving one problem that the company has introduced another one.”

When an automatic or touchless T-coil is recommended, consider the hearing aid customer and their current and future need for hearing assistive devices. Some people simply refuse to fiddle with assistive devices, or even with hearing aid switches. These people may be happiest with the touchless T-coil. Others who are exploring ways to maximize their listening ability in a variety of situations may find that a tradition T-coil offers more flexibility and better meets their needs. Unfortunately, some audiologists do not initially consider hearing assistive devices, so the customer or rehabilitation counselor may need to ask further questions before accepting the recommendation for touchless T-coils.

Dr. Ross’s column is supported, in part, by GRANT #H133E980010 from the U.S. Department of Education, NIDRR, to the Lexington Center. To read the full article see: <http://www.hearingloss.org/learn/touchless-tcoil.asp>



American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association BiAnnual Conference

*“Coming Full Circle: Deaf Services: Past,
Present and Future 1966 - 2007”*

May 23 - 26, 2007

Millennium Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri

www.adara.org

New ONE-NBR Improves Accessibility for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

NexTalk.net’s new “One-Nbr” provides deaf and hard of hearing people with their own personal and free 800 number. This same number can be used for voice, fax, TTY, Video Phone, and Relay calls. This innovation is a tremendous benefit in business and employment settings where providing multiple numbers is cumbersome. The system even takes messages as video or text. One number is all that is needed to allow complete communication access.

Learn more at www.NexTalk.net

New Video Remote Interpreting Call Center

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Oceana, and Ottawa counties.

Swanson said, "VRI will greatly benefit more than 4,500 Deaf individuals in West Michigan who rely on American Sign Language to communicate, especially those living in rural areas where there's been a lack of qualified interpreters."

VRI provides Deaf customers, local businesses and organizations with an alternative to the use of on-site sign language interpreters. VRI employs full motion video conferencing technology, allowing both deaf and hearing persons in the same room to communicate instantly with certified interpreters located in a remote video call center. The benefits of VRI include: no waiting time for interpreters to arrive, no advanced scheduling, no minimum charges, no travel charges, and compatibility with most existing video conferencing systems.

Individuals, companies, hospitals, schools and state and federal agencies can now more easily fulfill the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and No Child Left Behind, by subscribing to the VRI service.

"VRI provides instantaneous communication between Deaf and hearing persons in medical, educational,

legal, and employment settings," Swanson said. "VRI will help empower and engage Deaf individuals in West Michigan, furthering our mission of promoting economic and workforce development, and enhancing the quality of life for all Michigan citizens."

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DLEG awarded \$120,000 in grants to support the new VRI call center. The grants were issued by three bureaus within DLEG: Michigan Rehabilitation Services, the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns, and the Michigan Commission for the Blind. The grants are comprised of federal funds under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended and state funds.

The Deaf/Hard of Hearing Connection first opened in October 2003 with grant funding from DLEG and matching funds from four local community foundations: the Community Foundation for Muskegon County, the Fremont Area Foundation, the Gerber Foundation and the Grand Haven Area Foundation. Deaf/Hard of Hearing Connection is located at 500 West Western Ave., Suite 100, Muskegon MI.

Contact the office by phone at 231-722-dhhc, TTY 231-722-3443, and on the web at www.dhhc.org

Seeking Full-Time Interpreter

New VRI Call Center Hiring Staff

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Connection is offering a full benefits package, competitive salary and Monday thru Friday hours. The agency is located in Muskegon MI, on the shores of beautiful Lake Michigan.

Contact:

Voice- 231-722-dhhc (3442)

speyton@dhhc.org

<http://www.dhhc.org>



Recruiting: Deaf Education Teachers

Your assistance is requested in recruiting prospective teachers to the field of Deaf Education, especially those who are culturally or linguistically diverse. Individuals who are considering a career in Deaf Education and want more information about the profession, can visit a recruitment website to assist them with their decision. To reach prospective teachers, the new website needs to be widely disseminated. Please help us spread the word! Visit: www.deafed.net/diversity

The “PET-D” Program: Training in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Provision

The “Post-Employment Training Administration of Programs Serving Consumers who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing” (PET-D) program provides leadership and administrative training to those who serve consumers who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. PET-D training is provided through a 21-unit post-baccalaureate academic certificate in Rehabilitation Administration.

CURRICULUM

The first part of the PET-D program consists of 9 graduate level course credits that students complete during a four-week, on-campus training session during summer, 2007 at San Diego State University. This four-week session will begin on June 18TH and end on July 13TH. The curriculum includes:

- Organization Development
- Policy Development/Implementation
- Program Evaluation
- State/Federal/Legislative Issues
- Grant Proposal Development
- Personnel & Fiscal Management
- Leadership Development
- Consumer/Provider Collaboration
- Consumer-Based Organizations and Strategies
- Political/Ethical Issues
- Collaboration Among Agencies and Partners

The second part of the PET-D program commences upon completion of the 9-credit, on-campus summer program. The trainees return to their home agencies to complete an additional 12 units consisting of an advanced seminar (3 units), special study (3 units) and internship (six units). The projects completed through these three courses are pre-approved through an agreement between the PET-D trainees, their home agency supervisors, and the SDSU faculty. These projects are specifically designed to develop, improve or expand services delivered in the trainees’ agencies and programs.

FELLOWSHIPS

Eight fellowships per year are made available through a training grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). These fellowships pay for graduate tuition and fees for the 21-unit certificate as well as lodging and round trip transportation between the trainee’s home agency and SDSU. In addition, each trainee receives a per diem allowance for meals and incidental expenses while attending the four-week

summer program.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applicants who receive the highest priority are those individuals who have earned a masters degree in Rehabilitation with an emphasis in services with Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing clients or a graduate degree in a closely related field. Additionally, applicants who have several years of career experience subsequent to earning the masters degree have top priority. Recruitment is focused upon individuals who have five or more years of program administration or coordination experience. In addition to these factors, we recruit individuals who are currently employed in programs and agencies that are actively providing rehabilitation services to individuals who are Deaf and hard of hearing.

We frequently receive inquiries from individuals who do not meet the specific requirements described above. For example, individuals with an excess of 15 years of career experience in Deafness rehabilitation but no graduate education frequently express interest. We also receive inquiries from individuals not employed in the Federal/State rehabilitation system, but are employed in areas where rehabilitation services are provided, such as post-secondary programs and community-based agencies. We are definitely interested in further exploring the qualifications of such individuals and giving strong consideration to their admission to the PET-D program. Factors that always influence our admissions decision relate to the applicant’s personal awareness and experience with rehabilitation and disability as well as their leadership attributes.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PAST PARTICIPANTS

Since the PET-D program’s inception in 1987, over 90% of the participants have entered the program with a Masters degree in Rehabilitation/Deafness or a closely related field. The average number of years of post-masters career experience for this group is 12 years. They average six years of administration/program coordination experience. Subsequent to their training, many participants have been either promoted in their present positions, or moved on to other management positions. Additionally, the PET-D Program has been fortunate to recruit excellent trainers who encompass a wealth of experience in the field.

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Induction Loop with Portable Amplifier Perfect for Small Meeting Areas

One of the most difficult listening situations for a person with hearing loss is meetings. In large group meetings, it is becoming more common for the speaker to use a microphone. This is an immense help to many people who have even a mild to moderate hearing loss. For small group meetings, however, it is rare to have an amplifier, yet the listening situation (especially if more than one person is talking) may be extremely difficult for some participants.



The Induction Loop with Portable Amplifier provides benefits to meeting participants with or without hearing aids. The portable size makes it easy to move.

The System Includes:

- * Wireless Pro Table Amplifier System
- * Headset Microphone
- * Belt Clip Microphone
- * Hard Wired Hand Held Microphone
- * MegaLoop Induction Loop System

For those who have telecoils on their hearing aids, the amplifier will feed all the microphone inputs through the loop.

For those without telecoils, the microphone sound will be amplified acoustically. (Small soundfield speakers can be added at additional charge.)

The microphone and amplifier reduce strain on the speaker and make it easier for all participants to listen and pay attention, whether they have a hearing loss or not.

Harc Mercentile sells the system for \$450. Learn more at www.harc.com.

Through Deaf Eyes A PBS Special

Are you interested in learning more about Deaf culture? Turn on your television, Wednesday, March 21 at 9 PM to PBS. *"Through Deaf Eyes"* explores 200 years of Deaf life and culture in the Americas.

Learn more at www.pbs.org or visit <http://news.gallaudet.edu/newsreleases/?ID=9720> and check your local listings for channel information.

While you are visiting PBS watch this video clip about Deaf teens in New York City at: http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/shows/show_whatnormal-deafteens.html

"PET-D" Program

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DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION

There is no specific deadline for application submission. However, we are limited to providing RSA fellowship support to 8 applicants each year. Early application is therefore strongly recommended. If you are interested in attending, or would like more details about our program, please submit a statement of interest and current resume to:

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Director, Deafness Rehabilitation Programs
Department of Administration, Rehabilitation & Post-Secondary Education (ARPE)
San Diego State University
3590 Camino Del Rio North
San Diego, CA 92108-5313

Phone: (619) 594-1571 / 6406 Fax: (619) 594-0991
e-mail: rjacobs@mail.sdsu.edu

<http://www.interwork.sdsu.edu>